DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEWED BY P Schmelzer 7/2/85
DOC ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
E.O. AUTH. R
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September 18, 1981

Senator Glenn's Question:

I am against the outright sale of AWACS to anyone. This includes the NATO countries with whom we will be sharing operating control of AWACS in the NATO theater. It contains the most sophisticated flying electronic capability we possess. Joint surveillance capability in the Persian Gulf area is in US interests as well as Saudi interests. I would, therefore, propose a half-way step. Cut the price in half, in exchange for which the US would become part of a joint command structure for the AWACS. This would allow us to provide a fully capable AWACS to the area, not a downgraded version. If combat starts, the up-down link of the Saudi AWACS would be quickly jammed and it would become useless. It is, in effect, a "papertiger". The arrangement I am suggesting would let the Soviets and regional states such as Iran know that the US is involved and let Israel know that the planes will not be used against it. What is the Administration's attitude toward this proposal and has such an arrangement been discussed with the Saudis?

Answer:

Senator, these are serious and thoughtful questions which require serious answers.

First, as to the capabilities of these planes. Their specifications were the subject of very close consultation between our respective air forces as to what would be required in the regional threat environment in which they are to operate. It was recognized and agreed that certain sophisticated US systems, such as JTIDS, Have Quick and Mode IV IFF were not required to respond to the range of regional threats which the Saudis might face. Moreover, these systems incorporate highly sensitive technology. Consequently, these systems will be

deleted from the Saudi aircraft, and alternate systems designed by US manufactures to replace them. These alternate systems will, we believe, be fully adequate to the aircraft in its operational mission to detect and defend against threats emanating from within the region.

Second, it has not been, nor is it now our contention, that the Saudi AWACS would be able to protect Saudi territory against a direct and well-planned attack by the Soviet Union. If such an attack became imminent, we believe we would have early warning intelligence of the necessary preparations sufficiently in advance to be able to consult with the Saudi government and decide on appropriate countermeasures. In this connection, we have deliberately designed the Saudi AWACS so that they could quickly be converted to be fully interoperable with US forces.

The important thing here, however, is that with the sale of this air defense equipment and the strengthened strategic environment which we would expect to see evolve in the area by 1985, when the first Saudi AWACS will be delivered, further Soviet encroachments will become much more unlikely.

Let me now address, Senator, your second point regarding the possibility of some sort of joint command structure in

place of an outright sale. We have, over the course of our discussions with the Saudis on improving their air defense capabilities, examined a number of alternate arrangements. The fact of the matter is that leasing or joint control arrangements are not in the long term acceptable to the Saudi government or the Saudi people. The permanent basing of foreign forces on their soil is anathema to the Saudis as it is to other governments in that area with a strong anti-colonial heritage. For us to seek to ~~improve~~ impose a relationship which smacked of a "foreign base" or made the Saudis appear in the eyes of their neighbors as instruments of the Americans would be very shortsighted. It would risk having our forces and our presence become an unstabilizing element in the Saudi political fabric -- and bring about the very conditions we are trying to prevent.

Finally, a lease arrangement provides the <u>appearance</u> of extensive US control over the operation of the AWACS and safeguards against its misuse. In reality, however, there is no important difference between a lease or a sale. The nature of the AWACS is so complex that US personnel will be required in-country to maintain key elements of the system for its entire

life. The withdrawal of US support for the AWACS -- whoever owns the aircraft -- would quickly result in the system becoming non-operational.

We believe that the detailed understandings we have worked out with the Saudis meet to the maximum degree possible the legitimate concerns of both our governments.